

INSIDE...

FORT MACON EVENT	P. 4
NEW EXHIBITS OPEN	P. 5
HOWES HONORED	P. 6
GREEN SQUARE FUTURE	P. 7
BONES IN WACCAMAW	P.10

Michael F. Easley
Governor

June 2008

Volume 22 Number 3

William G. Ross Jr.
Secretary, DENR

PARKS' IMPACT: \$400 MILLION

STUDY FOCUSES ON CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL ECONOMIES

North Carolina's state parks potentially contribute \$289 million to local economies annually as well as \$120 million to local residents' income, according to conservative estimates in an intensive study researchers at North Carolina State University conducted for the Division of Parks and Recreation.

With "tourist" visitors spending an average \$23.56 a day to enjoy the outdoors, 14 state parks examined in the yearlong study contribute \$139 million annually when spending by tourists is combined with directing spending in the local communities by the parks.

In addition, the parks' impact on local residents' income was estimated at \$56 million annually.

The study projected the total potential economic impact (\$289 million) based on state-wide attendance and assumed similar travel and

**FIND THE COMPLETE ECONOMIC STUDY AT
WWW.NCPARKS.GOV. CLICK 'NEWS.'**

14 CASE STUDIES OF 'TOURIST' VISITORS

With 14 state parks surveyed for the economic impact report, there were some similarities across the board as well as variations.

Hanging Rock State Park was somewhat "typical." In a rural area, it draws large crowds for multi-day visits much of the year and offers a traditional menu of outdoor activities.

A key statistic is a park's percentage of "tourist" visitors – those who come from outside the county primarily to visit a state park. For the 14 parks, the percentage ranged from 17 percent



CAMPERS AT STONE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK ARE AMONG THOSE SPENDING ON AUTO EXPENSES, FOOD, EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES LOCALLY.

spending patterns for all visitors to the system's 36 state parks and state recreation areas.

For purposes of the study, "tourist" visitors were defined as those non-local visitors whose primary purpose for a trip was to visit a state park.

The researchers interviewed 852 of these "tourist" visitors in the 14 study parks and found that the average group size is 3.14 and the average stay in a local community is 1.73 days. Thus, the average group spends \$127.98 during a park visit for such things as food, lodging, souvenirs, services and equipment.

"Our state parks stand on their own as stunning conservation lands representing North Carolina's rich natural heritage. And, record visitation shows our citizens and visitors value them as such," said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system.

"The economic contributions revealed in this study suggest that the true value of state

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

Jack Gupton has been promoted to wastewater plant operator at Falls Lake State Recreation Area. A graduate of Franklinton High School and

Wake Tech Community College, he has 18 years of related experience and has worked for N.C. Central University and the towns of Butner and Wake

Forest.

Toby Hall has returned to Lake Waccamaw State Park as a ranger after serving three years as an enforcement officer with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. A graduate of the University of Maine with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management, he has also worked as a ranger for the National Park Service.

Maschelle Peyton is the new office assistant at Mount Mitchell State Park. She attended West Virginia State College and Fairmont State College in West Virginia and has more than 11 years related experience including employment with the U.S. Attorney's office in that state.

Lindy Allen has joined the division as the publications coordinator and webmaster. A graduate of Garner Senior High School and UNC-Wilmington with a bachelor's degree in English, she has worked for the Department of Cultural Resources and the Division of Forest Resources.

Becky Holmes is the new interpretive and education specialist for the north district. She is a graduate of Shawnee State University in Ohio with a bachelor's degree in natural science and has worked as an education programs instructor with the South Carolina Aquarium and a seasonal naturalist with the National Audubon Society.

Anthony DeSantis is a new ranger at Dismal Swamp State Park. He attended Lock Haven University and Millersville University, both in Pennsylvania, and has been a seasonal employee at state parks in Arizona, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

From The Director's Desk

Most people in the communities where our state parks are located have long held the notion that the parks are good for their local economies.

After all, in every county where a park is located, it draws more visitors than any other attraction. As we've planned new state parks through our *New Parks for a New Century* initiative, each community has welcomed the new park as a valued addition to the economic mix. But, that's been support based largely on faith. It's more difficult to determine a state park's contribution than that of manufacturing plants or retail centers, which directly generate jobs and tax revenues.

That's why the report just released by North Carolina State University's Recreation Resources Service is so important. Authors Dr. Jerusha Greenwood and Dr. Candace Vick devised a way to quantify the economic contribution of visitors to state parks, based on proven survey methods and the IMPLAN modeling software, an industry standard for economic impact research. Our gratitude goes to them for their hard work on the project.


Their study tallies the impact of all the visitors who travel just to visit a state park and the spending by state government to operate the park. And, the estimates are quite conservative – spending by local visitors and travelers who drop by on a whim is not calculated.

But, the result – an annual economic impact of \$400 million or more -- is impressive, even to those of us who have been in the state parks system for decades. It's likely that the state parks, conservation organizations and local communities will be poring over these numbers for some time to come.

The results are presented not as justification for state parks. That exists independently in our mission of conservation, education and recreation. Rather, it shows how closely we're tied to the communities where we serve and that we're partners in improving the quality of life in those communities.

Operating state parks is certainly a year-round business now, but the July Fourth holiday and the entire month remains especially busy. July is also National Parks and Recreation Month, and a good time to remember to make a special effort to help our visitors enjoy the parks safely.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

COASTAL GROUP GIVES AWARD TO HAMMOCKS

Hammocks Beach State Park was presented a 2008 Pelican Award from the N.C. Coastal Federation for its work in protecting and restoring coastal habitat.

The presentation was made in June at a federation rally in Raleigh. Park Superintendent Paul Donnelly and Ranger Sam Bland accepted on behalf of the park.

The Pelican Awards recognize exemplary achievements and actions by citizens, legislators, government officials and community groups in protecting and restoring coastal resources.

Specifically, the park was honored for a project that restored shoreline and wetland habitat in an area that was once a parking area for the park's former office.

With the help of volunteers and park staff, pavement was removed and areas were replanted to collect stormwater.

Also, a nearby bulkhead was removed to make way for replanted marsh grass, and natural reefs were built from recycled oyster shells.



SUPERINTENDENT PAUL DONNELLY, LEFT, AND RANGER SAM BLAND ACCEPT PELICAN AWARD FOR HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK.

BLAND GIVEN ROTARY HONOR

Sam Bland, a ranger and former superintendent at Hammocks Beach State Park, has been presented the 2008 Outstanding Public Citizen Award and the Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow award by the Swansboro Rotary Club.

The awards are presented to a non-Rotarian who contributes significantly to quality life in the community.

"Sam is very dedicated and goes way beyond the norm in what he does," said Todd Miller, president of the N.C. Coastal Federation. "It's our opinion that Hammocks Beach is a stellar example of good environmental stewardship."

Bland worked with the

federation and other environmental groups in adding Huggins Island and its maritime forest to the state park, and also has partnered with them to restore shoreline habitat and wetlands in a former parking area of the park.

He helped initiate a rainwater collection program and an oyster shell recycling program to build oyster reefs as well as the park's annual Toys for Tots Marsh Cruise program, and a park Military Appreciation Day.

He writes an environmental education column for the Tideland News and documents species in the Natural Resource Inventory Database.

'PARK' IT WITH A STATE PARKS SPECIALTY LICENSE TAG



The Division of Parks and Recreation is accepting applications and payment for the first 300 license plates. There is a \$30 fee in addition to regular license fees (\$60 for personalized plates). Additional fees support conservation through the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.

**Applications online at www.ncparks.gov
or write: Adrienne McCoig, N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
1615 MSC, Raleigh, NC 27699-1615**

FORT MACON PLANS LARGEST FACILITY

The state parks system launched construction in May of its largest park facility, a 22,547-square-foot coastal education and visitor center at Fort Macon State Park.

A groundbreaking event April 27 coincided with the annual ice cream social of Friends of Fort Macon, a volunteer support group.

“Fort Macon is our second oldest state park and among our busiest with more than 1.2 million visitors in 2007, and that presents a tremendous opportunity to teach the natural history of our coast alongside the military history of the fort itself,” said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system.

“The center has also been designed to showcase certified green building techniques and serve as a model of stewardship in the coastal environment.”

The 182-year-old fortress was fully restored in 1999-03 and visitors get a good dose of Civil War history as they tour its battlements and exhibits. The new coastal education and visitor center will offer other historical details but its focus will be on the natural history of the state’s barrier islands.

Sometimes, military and natural history merge. One story the center will tell is the work of prominent natural historians Elliott Coues and Henry Yarrow, whose day jobs in the mid-1800s were as surgeons at the fort.

The pair recorded their observations at the outpost and regularly sent dispatches and specimens to the Smithsonian Institution.

At the groundbreak-



SUPERINTENDENT JODY MERRITT WELCOMES THE CROWD TO THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE NEW COASTAL EDUCATION AND VISITOR CENTER AT FORT MACON STATE PARK.

ing ceremony, Ledford said it’s important that visitors and the state’s citizens learn the importance of the coastal ecology.

“In its very long life, this fort has seen a lot of changes, but the greatest changes may lie ahead with the coast threatened like never before,” he said. “Having a place to educate citizens and visitors is of lasting importance.”

The parks system has built 18 visitor centers since the mid-1990s, and construction also began this spring on a center at Merchants Millpond State Park.

The Fort Macon project represents an investment of \$8.2 million from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and will offer 4,000 square feet of exhibit space, a teaching auditorium and conference room, along with administrative offices.

The center was designed to meet sustainability standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

program of the United States Green Building Council. It will have features such as rainwater collection and low-flow water systems, recycled construction materials and preferred parking for alternative fuel vehicles.

The center’s brick-and-block design will reflect that of the fort. The building site is just southeast of the fort and near existing parking areas expanded during the fort’s restoration.

Park Superintendent Jody Merritt said that members of the Friends of Fort Macon have been staunch supporters of the project since it was first envisioned more than a decade ago. The organization has raised funds for extensive fort exhibits and provided volunteers to help with tours of the fort.

The construction period is expected to be 18 months.

The designer of record is Hobbs Architecture of Pittsboro, and general contractor is Daniels & Daniels Construction Co. of Goldsboro.

SOUTH MOUNTAINS OPENS EXHIBITS

A new exhibit hall that completes a new visitor center at South Mountains State Park was formally dedicated in May.

Among more than 50 people attending the ceremony were kindergarten and first grade students from Morganton Day School, who helped with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

They were also among the first to enter the exhibit hall with their parents and teachers. Wide-eyed wonder was followed by exclamations of "Wow," and "Look at that."

"We are excited about what this means for the community," said Donnie Bain, the head of the school. "Our children will have an excellent opportunity to learn about the environment they live and play in."

The project represents an investment of \$400,000 from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal funding source for state park capital projects and land acquisition.



STUDENTS AND TEACHERS FROM MORGANTON DAY SCHOOL HELPED WITH A RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY TO OPEN THE EXHIBIT HALL.

Design of the exhibit hall began during the construction of the 7,500-square-foot visitor center, which opened in December 2006.

The centerpiece exhibit is a replica of High Shoals Falls, the park's most popular natural feature. A boardwalk leads visitors to a 25-foot-tall photograph that serves as a backdrop for a diorama on the ecology

of the falls. A video brings the sound of rushing water.

The exhibit is a way to bring the experience to people unable to hike the trails.

The exhibits also include a "carpet wall" mural, a nocturnal theater, a microscope to explore streamside insects and dioramas of different habitats in the park's important watersheds.

"Along with the educational programs that the rangers provide, this exhibit hall will be a great tool for teaching park visitors about being good stewards of our land," said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system. "This is where environmental education at the park can begin."

The exhibit hall will augment the center's teaching auditorium, laboratory/classroom and staff offices.

Much of the research for the exhibits was conducted by rangers at the park. The project was designed by Discovery Exhibits Inc. of Santa Fe, Minn., and principal fabricator was Studio Displays of Pineville.



TRIMMING FOR SAFETY

MAINTENANCE MECHANICS FROM SEVERAL STATE PARKS IN THE WEST DISTRICT GATHERED AT CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK FOR SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER THIS YEAR TO TRIM TREES ON THE APPROACH ROAD TO CHIMNEY ROCK. LIMBS AND TREES THAT WERE DAMAGED BY WIND AND FREEZES AND IN DANGER OF TOPPLING WERE REMOVED.

TRAIL PROJECT AMONG PARTF GRANTS

Among 34 local grants approved by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority in May was the first one dedicated to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Alamance County was awarded \$400,000 to acquire property in the trail corridor and will use donated property as a match for the trust fund grant.

The trust fund authority earlier set aside \$8.5 million in certificates of participation (similar to bonds) to purchase tracts along the route of the trail. Those funds will be targeted at

other tracts in Alamance County and elsewhere to help place critical links in the 1,000-mile trail corridor.

The 34 grants for local parks and recreation projects total \$12.8 million. In this year's funding cycle, the authority received 89 grant applications requesting more than \$27 million.

Thirty percent of the trust fund is set aside for the grant program, which has supported \$122 million in projects since 1995.

The awards represent

approximately three quarters of the 2007-08 revenues for the program, and the authority will consider more applications at its July meeting.

Eighteen of the successful grant applications were for the maximum amount of \$500,000.

The projects included an array of recreation amenities such as athletic fields, swimming pools, playgrounds, walking trails and greenways, fishing ponds and piers, community centers and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

HOWES HONORED FOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Jonathan B. Howes, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority for 10 years, was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award from North Carolina State University's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management.

Howes was presented the award – along with a keepsake clock – at the authority's May meeting in Raleigh.

Doug Wellman, head of the department, said that beyond Howes' service as an administrator at UNC-Chapel Hill and his tenure as secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources, his commitment to the success of the trust fund was an overriding contribution.

During his chairmanship, the trust fund has awarded 487 grants to local governments worth \$92 million, and the state parks system has flourished with new land acquisitions and improved facilities.

"This is a gift that keeps on giving," Wellman said.

Howes' "statesmanship" helped create the trust fund and



HOWES, LEFT, GETS A STANDING OVATION FROM DOUG WELLMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND AUTHORITY.

gave it direction, furthered cooperation with other state conservation funds and spread knowledge of the state parks system, in part by holding trust fund meetings in the parks, Wellman said.

The university has bestowed 12 such lifetime achievement awards.

Howes said that he shares the recognition with the staff of the Division of Parks and Recreation, which administers the trust fund.

"In the end, what this represents – and it's fitting that this is a clock – is the timeless quality of this work we're doing for generations to come," he said.

Governor Jim Hunt appointed Howes as a cabinet secretary in 1993. He had been serving at UNC at Chapel Hill as director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies and as a research professor.

Before joining the university in 1970, Howes held top policy positions in the U.S. Urban Policy Center, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

He also served as mayor of Chapel Hill, president of the League of Municipalities and chairman of the Triangle J Council of Governments.

GROUND BROKEN FOR GREEN SQUARE

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources used Earth Day as an occasion to begin moving some earth for a new Green Square office and research center in downtown Raleigh. A groundbreaking ceremony drew about 400 people.

The complex will eventually house the headquarters staff of the state parks system along with other DENR divisions.

Three dilapidated government buildings on Jones Street just west of the Legislative Building were demolished to make way for the \$104 million complex that will explore state-of-the-art technology in green building design.

To begin, rubble from the demolished buildings will be reused in the foundation.

Along with the 172,000-square-foot office building for DENR employees, the complex will include an 80,000-square-foot Nature Research Center to augment the existing N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences across the street.

Joe Hackney, Speaker of the House, told the crowd at the groundbreaking that the project reflects the state's commitment to tackling environmental issues.

"A building is never just a building," Hackney said. "This is further evidence that we here in North Carolina take environmental issues and energy issues seriously and we're willing to take our time and money to solve some of the serious issues of the day."

The Nature Research Center will expand on the mission of the natural sciences museum, said Director Betsy Bennett. Its centerpiece will be a four-story, multimedia presentation area called the Daily Planet that will describe how scientific research



HOUSE SPEAKER JOE HACKNEY SPEAKS AT GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY.

in the state meshes with research around the world.

The center will also house hands-on laboratories and an astronomy platform where visitors can get a taste of research techniques, as well as a conference center where visiting scientific

experts can lecture.

"In the Museum of Natural Sciences, we're really focusing on what we know about North Carolina's environment," Bennett said. "In the nature center, we're focusing on how we know what

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

PARKS HONOR EARTH DAY

Earth Day 2008 lasted at least a week in North Carolina's state parks, with more than half the parks scheduling special activities, hikes and projects from April 19-26.

At Medoc Mountain, Ranger Nicole Crider organized kids and adults to build a butterfly garden using shrubs and trees donated by local plant nurseries and garden centers. It's part of the park's new outdoor exhibits that demonstrate how to attract wildlife to backyards.

The garden will be used for ranger-led programs on butterflies and attracting wildlife. Visitors can walk a small trail through the garden to get an up-close look at some of nature's most beautiful and interesting creatures.

Several parks teamed with local school systems and other agencies to host large groups of

students who arrived en masse to study environmental themes.

Jones Lake held its second annual Environmental Days for all fifth graders in the county. And at Cliffs of the Neuse, about 250 sixth graders arrived on a sunny Friday as part of Earth Week in cooperation with the Goldsboro Parks and Recreation Department.

At Kerr Lake, a similar event is called an Eco Meet and takes the form of an environmental education competition for middle and high school teams from a six-county area. Categories include aquatics, hydrology, forestry, herpetology, interpretation, endangered species, wildlife and soil science.

Eno River rangers presented activities from their Environmental Education Learning Experience with visitors sloshing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

ECONOMIC STUDY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

parks to local communities and the state is even greater than we realized.”

In 2007, state parks reported record-level visitation of 13.4 million. That represents more than three times the combined attendance for the Carolina Panthers, Lowe’s Motor Speedway events and Atlantic Coast Conference basketball games within North Carolina.

The study was conducted by Recreation Resources Service of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at NCSU.

Researchers visited each of the 14 parks three to five times during the year on weekdays and weekends. They interviewed 2,164 park visitors to determine a percentage of tourist visitors. The data was then analyzed with IMPLAN modeling software, an industry standard for economic impact research.

State parks vary in size, style and personality. So, researchers chose parks that represent a broad cross-section of the parks system, including some with high day-use attendance, such as Jockey’s Ridge and Hammocks Beach state parks and Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, as well as those popular for weekend camping trips, such as Stone Mountain and Hanging Rock state parks. Large and small parks, as well as those in urban and

rural communities, were included in the study.

The researchers noted that estimates of annual economic impact are conservative because of the narrow focus of the study. Local residents visiting the state parks and so-called “casual” visitors who traveled primarily for other reasons were not surveyed.

The study found that the percentage of tourist – non-local, primary purpose – visitors varies widely at different types of parks, from 17

THE AVERAGE GROUP...

...HAS **3.14 VISITORS**

...STAYS **1.73 DAYS**

...SPENDS **\$127.98**

percent at Eno River State Park to 75 percent at Merchants Millpond State Park.

Analysis of the research shows that the state parks make a considerable economic contribution directly to the communities through operations budgets and jobs.

The direct impact of the 14 parks was \$15 million in sales, \$10 million in personal income and 256.9 full-time equivalent jobs. Park capital projects were not included. Nor were park fees,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

HOW THEY COMPARE...

	<i>% of Tourists</i>	<i>Annual Tourist Expenditures</i>	<i>Impact on Sales</i>	<i>Impact on Residents' Income</i>	<i>Jobs Created</i>	<i>Return on \$1 State Investment</i>
Eno River	17	\$797,152	\$1,737,180	\$907,352	29.6	\$1.80
Fort Fisher	45	\$14,503,877	\$20,067,545	\$7,936,204	390.8	\$25.10
Fort Macon	24	\$12,105,587	\$16,414,170	\$6,676,332	326.4	\$13.80
Gorges	45	\$2,533,239	\$3,718,748	\$1,458,457	71	\$5.80
Hammocks Beach	45	\$1,587,542	\$2,672,836	\$1,275,456	57.9	\$2.50
Hanging Rock	30	\$1,355,572	\$2,303,204	\$1,171,648	46.7	\$2.80
Jockey's Ridge	25	\$10,760,645	\$14,255,921	\$5,860,588	259	\$15.00
Jordan Lake	25	\$2,874,796	\$4,868,070	\$2,246,721	80.2	\$1.90
Kerr Lake	63	\$12,824,320	\$17,569,214	\$7,863,741	374.6	\$5.80
Merchants Millpond	75	\$1,399,088	\$1,729,870	\$806,072	47.7	\$2.20
Morrow Mountain	69	\$1,897,707	\$3,155,349	\$1,531,637	71.5	\$4.00
Mount Mitchell	52	\$8,875,126	\$11,221,959	\$4,702,632	236.8	\$10.20
Pilot Mountain	59	\$2,103,968	\$3,302,216	\$1,510,488	73.1	\$3.60
Stone Mountain	66	\$3,071,178	\$4,554,523	\$2,022,825	94.2	\$4.50

CASE STUDIES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

at Eno River State Park to 75 percent at Merchants Millpond State Park.

At Hanging Rock, the percentage is 30 percent, or 99,441 of the 329,520 visitors in 2004, the year of the study's focus.

The remainder live in Stokes County (62 percent) or traveled to the area for other reasons (8 percent).

ECONOMIC STUDY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

such as for camping, since those revenues are returned directly to the state's general fund.

The study found that for each \$1 invested by the state on park operations, the return in the local communities ranged from \$1.80 at Eno River State Park to \$25.10 at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area

When this park spending is combined with the impact of tourist visitor spending, the annual economic impact ranged from \$1.73 million at Eno River State Park, which had visitation in 2007 of 341,646, to \$20 million at Fort Fisher, where 2007 visitation was 834,544.

TRUST FUND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

picnic shelters.

More than \$2.7 million will be spent on park land acquisition.

In the past two years, the trails staff of the state parks system has been refining plans for piedmont corridors of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, a designated unit of the parks system.

Along with the tracts in Alamance County, it's hoped that funding through certificates of participation will spur trail development in Guilford, Orange and Johnston counties. In each case, local governments have been aggressive in

Those key "tourist" visitors spent an estimated \$1.35 million, primarily on auto expenses, groceries, lodging and dining out.

Add to that the park's operating budget for that year of \$616,920, and you begin to get a overall picture of the park's economic impact in Stokes County.

The combined total impact on sales and on local residents' income was estimated at \$3.47 million. About \$57,580 in sales tax was generated.

Moreover, all of this represents 46.7 jobs in the county.

Another intriguing statistic was the "leverage of state dollars," in other words the rate of return that counties get for the state's investment in the park.

Each \$1 that the state invests in Hanging Rock earns \$2.80 for the local economy.

For the 14 parks surveyed, the rate of return ranged from \$1.80 at Eno River to \$25.10 at Fort Fisher.

And what did all these folks enjoy doing at Hanging Rock? The top activities were hiking (73 percent), camping (45 percent) and picnicking (55 percent).

creating local trail plans that could mesh with the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

The plan is for the state to purchase the land and partner with local governments to manage it as part of the trail.

Alamance County has been among the most active, hiring a trail development coordinator and becoming a strong partner in trail development along the Haw River corridor.

The trust fund grant would help develop the trail along the river between Glencoe Mills and the Town of Haw River.

EARTH DAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

through the waters to learn about water bugs, water flow and pH balance.

Both Jordan Lake and Crowders Mountain took an Earth Day opportunity to engage volunteers in cleaning up the environment.

"Operation Clean a Crag" at Crowders Mountain targeted the peak of the mountain itself and Kings Pinnacle, while at Jordan Lake, litter was collected on a one-mile section of road that bisects

the park.

Pettigrew State Park staff combined Earth Day and Arbor Day into a work day to plant an arboretum of native woody plants at the park.

Along with the usual hikes to observe flora and fauna, some parks also planned indoor activities such as environmentally-themed movies shown in the visitor centers at Lake Waccamaw and South Mountains.

SKULL- DIGGERY

DIVERS WITH THE UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY BRANCH USE A VACUUM TO REMOVE SILT FROM THE DIG SITE IN WAIST-DEEP WATER.



EXPLORING WACCAMAW TOP TO BOTTOM

Rangers at Lake Waccamaw State Park are boning up on their paleontology since 4,000-year-old bones began turning up in the bed of the shallow lake.

Researchers from the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences and divers from the Underwater Archaeology Branch began in May recovering skull fragments of a Pleistocene-era whale from a limestone outcrop in the lake.

The 20-foot-long creature is likely a member of the baleen family, a class of whales that includes today's humpback and right whale species.

"Why we think this is important is that it looks like it's largely in one piece, which is very rare for skulls found in North Carolina," researcher Vince Schneider told the Wilmington Star-News. "You never know what it could lead to, and that's part of the fun."

Chris Helms, the park superintendent, is hopeful the skull could eventually be displayed in

the park's exhibit hall, adding an intriguing facet to the natural and cultural history on display.

Schneider and others weren't surprised at the discovery of whale fossils nearly 50 miles from the ocean. Only a few thousand years ago, much of eastern North Carolina was covered by the ocean, adding another twist to the mystery of how the state's chain of bay lakes was formed.

The fossils could shed light on the prehistoric animal life forms that roamed in and near the saltwater, coast and marshes of North Carolina long before humans arrived, Schneider said.

The limestone deposit that runs through the Lake Waccamaw area has already yielded fossils of prehistoric horses and giant sloths, some of which are on display at a forestry museum in Whiteville.

The whale's skull was literally stumbled upon last summer by Cathy Neilson, a park neighbor, when she was wading the shallow water in front of her family home. She reached into the lakebed and pulled loose a fossil.

That prompted Helms and Charles Zidar, the state parks system exhibits curator, to investigate further and seek Schneider's help.

The state divers, under the direction of Richard Lawrence, usually spend their time on shipwrecks and other human debris. They were invaluable partners in the recovery effort, devising a vacuum system for removing silt and pecking away enough limestone to lift three skull pieces, the largest about the size of a engine block.



VINCE SCHNEIDER, LEFT, OF THE MUSEUM AND DIVER RICHARD LAWRENCE WITH A SKULL FRAGMENT.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

PIEDMONT BIRDING TRAIL OPENS

The mountains and the coast are exciting places to visit, but for a birder, some of the best sightings are sometimes right in the backyard.

That's one reason sponsoring agencies and birders are excited about the opening in May of the Piedmont Region of the North Carolina Birding Trail. Of the 103 sites listed on the trail, 29 are managed by the state parks system.

"The piedmont is where most of the people are and it's important to have the trail here," said Chris Canfield, executive director of Audubon North Carolina. "Communities are going to see the benefit of this and are going to be motivated to support conservation."

It was nearly one year ago that the Coastal Region Birding Trail was inaugurated at Hammocks Beach State Park featuring 102 sites where birders can build a travel itinerary to add to their life lists of species.

A consortium of state agencies and conservation groups views the birding trail as a way to promote ecotourism and build a conservation ethic close to home. It was a natural outgrowth of Audubon's designation of "important bird areas" in the state worthy of special efforts to protect critical habitat.

The joint effort includes Audubon, the state parks system, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Cooperative Extension, N.C. Sea Grant and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wildlife Resources committed a trail coordinator position, and Salinda Daley took over from an Audubon volunteer to work fulltime on the effort.

She has already begun work on a moun-

WACCAMAW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Those were taken back to the museum to further separate the fossils from limestone that encases them, a process likely to take months.

Schneider said that it's difficult to tell yet how much of the whale remains in the lakebed or what else it might yield, and researchers hope to return later this year.

The fossil site is in waist-high water, which makes recovery relatively easy, but also makes the site accessible to amateur fossil-hunters. Through the media, Helms reminded people that fossils in the lake are state property and



FALLS LAKE RANGER BRIAN BOCKHAHN MANS A BOOTH AT THE BIRDING TRAIL OPENING.

tain region trail.

Both the coastal and piedmont trails have come with an extensive web presence (ncbirding-trail.org) and a glossy guide that offers details on the amenities of each birding site and what species might be spotted there.

"This project is another good reason to come and energize yourself with nature and get back into state and local parks," Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system, told a group at the trail's grand opening celebration at Durant Nature Park in Raleigh.

The birding trail is a good fit for state parks, Ledford said. Many state parks are already designated as important bird areas and the system's natural resource management team has been aggressive in protecting habitats and documenting species.

Dozens of the trail's "species of special interest" have already been documented in the parks.

Birders attracted by the trail project are an important constituency for the state parks system and its partners and are desirable visitors for local communities, Ledford said.

"Natural resources are like economic engines in our state, and we need to make sure we protect those resources."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains that birding is the fastest growing outdoor activity by some measures. Americans have spent nearly \$32 billion in recent years watching wildlife.

Fred Harris, director of the Wildlife Resources Commission, said the trail is important in the larger context of promoting wildlife conservation in the state and a critical element in getting the urban populace "out where the pavement ends."

TOTTEN COMPLETES STATE PARKS CAREER

Billy Totten completed a 30-year career as a state park ranger, superintendent and district superintendent in May, joining his colleagues for a picnic and offering a summary observation.

"Our mission is and always has been unique," he said. "There is no other job like this."

The farewell event was held at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area where Totten was superintendent for 14 years.

Changes in the state parks system have been dramatic, and the pace of change has increased in recent years, he said.

"The outward appearance (of the parks) has changed dramatically over the decades. What doesn't change is your inward commitment to state parks and to the people of North Carolina," he told colleagues.

Totten is a native of Durham who began working in the parks as a seasonal naturalist and a youth volunteer coordinator in the 1970s. He earned a bachelor's degree in parks, conservation and recreation



RETIRING NORTH DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT BILLY TOTTEN SAYS GOODBYE TO HIS COLLEAGUES DURING A RETIREMENT PICNIC EVENT.

from East Carolina University in 1979 and worked briefly for the City of Greenville.

From 1980 to 1990, he was a ranger at Stone Mountain and Lake Norman state parks before being promoted to a superintendent's position at Jordan Lake. He was promoted to district superintendent in August 2004.

Totten is a medical first responder, holds advanced law enforcement certification and earned the division's distin-

guished service award.

He was also among the first park superintendents to achieve environmental education certification.

He guided the park at Jordan Lake through a period of tremendous growth. Annual visitation began topping one million as more than 1,000 campsites regularly filled to capacity on weekends and the permanent staff grew to more than 30.

Both Adrian O'Neal, east district superintendent and Greg Schneider, former Jordan Lake superintendent and now chief of operations, credited Totten with convincing them to spend their careers in the state parks.

"He's been a big part of a lot of our careers," said West District Superintendent Tom Jackson.

Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks, told Totten, "There's no estimate that can be made of the value of quality work that good people do, and you've completed a wonderful career."

GREEN SQUARE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

we know."

Bennett said there is research going on in North Carolina that is having an effect around the world, and the public would like to know about that.

U.S. Rep. Brad Miller said the concept is "totally cool."

"We need to have a place where children can learn that science is neat, fascinating and that there's a sense of wonder about it," Miller said.

The complex will have environmentally friendly features

such as a green roof that will absorb stormwater and windows designed to enhance natural lighting and reduce energy costs.

Bill Ross, secretary of the department, said, "One of the good things about launching this on Earth Day is that it gives us a chance to lead by example toward a green and productive future."

The aim is to present North Carolina's premier sustainable project, said John Atkins of O'Brien/Atkins, the architectural design firm.

SEVEN NEW RANGERS COMMISSIONED

Seven new state park rangers received commissions as law enforcement officers at a special ceremony March 26 at William B. Umstead State Park.

Superior Court Judge John R. Jolly, Jr. swore in the seven as Special Peace Officers.

Commissions went to: Christopher Ernest Cabral at Goose Creek State Park; Kevin Joseph Bischof at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area; Michael Robert Eisch at South Mountains State Park; Nora Jean McGrath at Lake James State Park; Matthew Herbert Mutel at Mount Mitchell State Park; Kelly Kathleen Ondek at William B. Umstead State Park; and, Krista Sue Yantis at Morrow Mountain State Park.

Receiving a commission as a Special Peace Officer at the end of 17-week basic law enforcement training is generally regarded as the last formal step before a ranger takes on full duties in a unit of the state parks system.

During the training period prior to commissioning, a ranger is assimilated into the park and begins assuming duties in resource management and visitor service.

Jolly told the group that when presiding in court, he was always impressed with the dedication, work ethic and integrity of all the law enforcement officers in the state.

"It's a very heartwarming and comforting thing as a citizen to see that," Jolly said. "We as citizens should be proud – and, I hope we know to be proud – of the jobs you're undertaking."

Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks sys-



JUDGE JOLLY ADMINISTERS THE OATH OF OFFICE.

tem, noted that the system is in a period of transition with many senior rangers and park superintendents eligible for retirement. Also, the demographic of park visitors is changing. Many of them are older and more urban-oriented, he said.

But, the heritage of service in the state parks is a very important one to maintain, Ledford said. "I hope you'll continue to develop competencies and continue to keep that passion for what the parks system is all about."

Greg Schneider, chief of operations, said that among the class of new rangers, Mutel from Mount Mitchell State Park won the academic award for his class, and Bischof of Jordan Lake captured a driving award.

Schneider said that the commissions come with the responsibility of controlling people's behavior and that responsibility is added to those concerned with natural resource protection and environmental education.

FREEMAN PROMOTED AT JONES LAKE

Shane Freeman, a veteran ranger at Jones Lake State Park, has been named superintendent of the park in Bladen County. Freeman succeeds Shederick Mole, who became superintendent at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area earlier this year.

As superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

Freeman came to Jones Lake as a ranger in October 2006. He is a native of Robeson County and served in a military police company with the U.S. Army Reserve. He is a 2003 graduate of the University of North Carolina-Pembroke with a



bachelor's degree in recreation management and administration. He worked as a seasonal employee at Jones Lake and Hanging Rock state parks.

Freeman joined the state parks system full time in 2003 as a ranger at South Mountains State Park and later worked at Lake Waccamaw State Park. He is a certified environmental educator and holds intermediate law enforcement certification.

"Shane has broad experience in the state parks system as well as a thorough knowledge of southeastern North Carolina and the bay lakes region," said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system. "He is an excellent choice as superintendent of one of our oldest state parks. With a new visitor center and related facilities, it also remains one of our most popular with the local community."

Freeman said, "I have worked at Jones Lake

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

ALLCOX TO LEAD SOUTH DISTRICT

Angelia Allcox, a 12-year veteran of the state parks system, has been promoted to south district superintendent. She succeeds Greg Schneider, who became chief of operations in January.

As one of four district superintendents, Allcox will be responsible for operations, resource management, environmental education, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance for 10 state parks from Morrow Mountain in Stanly County to Fort Fisher State Recreation Area on the southeast coast.

"Angelia has energy and enthusiasm as well as broad experience as a ranger, parks superintendent and law enforcement specialist. Those are qualities we look for in such a key leadership position," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division.

Allcox grew up in Durham County and graduated from UNC-Wilmington in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in natural resource management and commercial recreation. After working as a sea-



sonal employee at Falls Lake State Recreation Area, she was hired as a ranger there in 1996.

She was promoted to superintendent at Singletary Lake State Park in 2000, with administrative oversight for White and Bay Tree state lakes.

In 2006, she became a law enforcement specialist for the division.

She holds advanced law enforcement certification, is a firearms instructor for the division and a prescribed burn boss. She is a certified environmental educator and open-water diver and volunteers as a public safety diver.

"After living and working in Bladen County for almost six years, I feel like I'm coming home to the south district," Allcox said.

"I'm excited, but humbled, that I've been given this challenging opportunity. This region has some of the most unique, beautiful and inspiring natural resources in the nation, and I look forward to working closely with citizens, advocacy groups and park staffs as we work to preserve and protect our state's natural heritage."

OWEN PROMOTED AT FORT FISHER

Jeff Owen has been promoted to superintendent at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. He succeeds Matt Windsor, who became superintendent at Pilot Mountain State Park earlier this year.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

Owen has been a ranger at the state recreation area since July 2007 primarily as a waterfront supervisor. A native of Germanton in Forsyth County, he graduated from UNC-Wilmington in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management. While in college, he worked at the Fort Fisher State Historic Site as an interpretive specialist.

Owen joined the state parks system in March 2003 as a ranger at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park in Wayne County. He is a certified environmental educator.

"Fort Fisher is one of our busiest state park units, and Jeff's experience and enthusiasm will be



valuable as we continue to balance intensive recreation demands at the park with protection of its important natural resources and rare species," said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system.

Owen said, "I am excited about the opportunity to lead Fort Fisher. I look forward to continued work with the staff as we embrace the challenge of providing quality outdoor recreation and protecting some of the state's most unique natural resources."

Fort Fisher State Recreation Area encompasses 287 acres and its staff has management responsibilities for about eight miles of undeveloped beach within the park and in the adjoining Bald Head Island State Natural area. The park recorded 834,544 visits in 2007.

FREEMAN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

in a variety of capacities and I look forward to working with the exceptional staff in my new capacity, to protect and enhance the unique natural resources found at the park."

Jones Lake State Park was created in 1939 and encompasses 2,208 acres. The park recorded 69,974 visits in 2007.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT

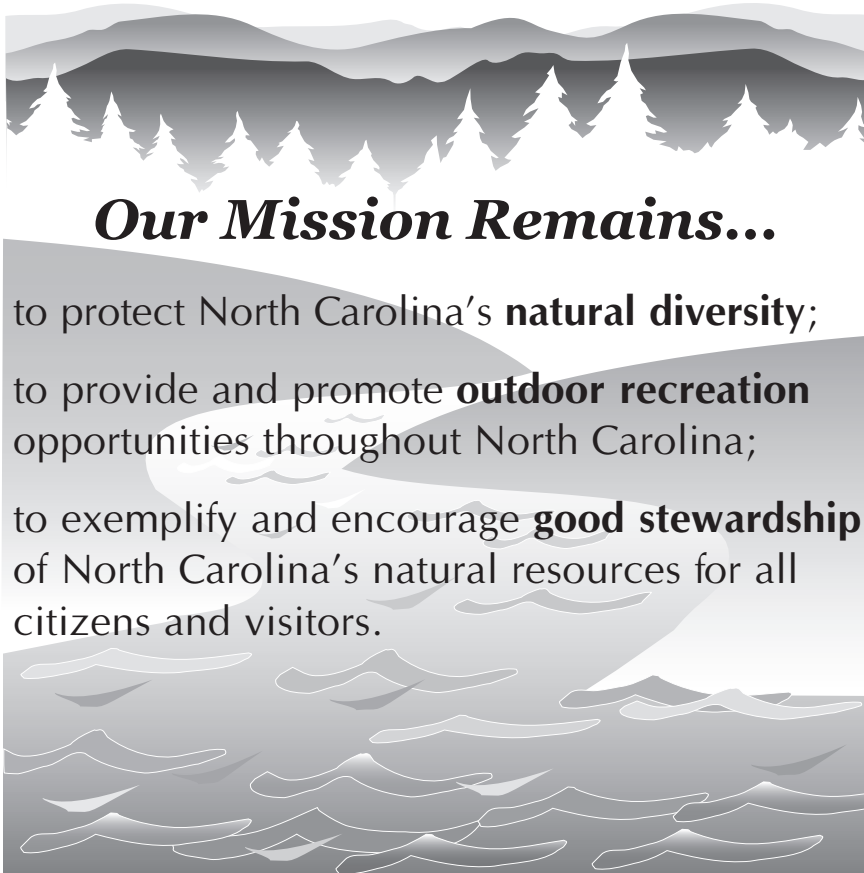
MARCH, 2008

NC STATE PARK	March 2008	TOTAL YTD Mar-08	March 2007	TOTAL YTD Mar-07	% CHANGE (2008/2007) Mar YTD
Carolina Beach	36,790	83,930	34,358	83,762	7% 0%
Cliffs of the Neuse	8,671	23,543	11,110	23,533	-22% 0%
Crowders Mountain	41,152	93,674	40,426	90,118	2% 4%
Dismal Swamp	1,419	1,419	0	0	-100% -100%
Eno River including Occoneechee Mountain	35,907	90,216	34,247	82,210	5% 10%
Falls Lake	52,782	81,688	60,530	82,956	-13% -2%
Fort Fisher	32,372	63,224	35,875	82,645	-10% -23%
Fort Macon	82,822	168,922	76,256	162,444	9% 4%
Goose Creek	12,254	30,562	11,726	30,578	5% -0%
Gorges	712	7,534	7,667	14,129	-91% -47%
Hammocks Beach	8,424	17,403	7,332	16,551	15% 5%
Haw River	2,474	4,828	3,475	5,792	-29% -17%
Hanging Rock	28,458	58,408	28,762	61,866	-1% -6%
Jones Lake	6,555	15,557	2,615	6,841	151% 127%
Jordan Lake	28,410	70,447	48,862	85,514	-42% -18%
Jockey's Ridge	85,638	122,834	74,112	136,579	16% -10%
Kerr Lake	67,636	136,304	56,512	108,800	20% 25%
Lake James	23,081	46,043	24,660	52,063	-6% -12%
Lake Norman	40,062	96,219	40,242	86,883	-0% 11%
Lake Waccamaw	6,258	15,692	7,155	13,495	-13% 16%
Lumber River	6,804	17,556	6,980	15,944	-3% 10%
Merchants Millpond	20,696	45,184	11,448	31,060	81% 45%
Medoc Mountain	4,124	8,704	3,790	8,058	9% 8%
Mount Mitchell	3,250	6,228	8,269	11,701	-61% -47%
Morrow Mountain	29,642	63,260	29,992	63,180	-1% 0%
New River including Mount Jefferson	12,524	27,881	13,552	29,382	-8% -5%
Pettigrew	7,903	16,837	6,170	13,244	28% 27%
Pilot Mountain	N/A	N/A	32,160	68,871	-100% -53%
Raven Rock	11,974	26,724	10,192	22,256	17% 20%
Singletary Lake	2,284	6,284	2,069	5,486	10% 15%
South Mountains	13,633	33,878	16,223	39,355	-16% -14%
Stone Mountain	27,764	59,840	34,116	72,916	-19% -18%
Weymouth Woods	4,557	13,456	4,558	12,959	-0% 4%
William B. Umstead	66,162	143,622	56,331	130,787	17% 10%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	827,420	1,753,594	841,772	1,751,958	-2% 0%

CORRECTION

The attendance chart on Page 15 of the April 2008 Steward was in error regarding reported attendance for 2007 and for December 2007 at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. The correct attendance at the

park for that month was 26,361 and the total attendance in 2007 was 1,190,973. A corrected attendance chart is on the division's web site (www.ncparks.gov) under *The Steward*.



Our Mission Remains...

to protect North Carolina's **natural diversity**;

to provide and promote **outdoor recreation** opportunities throughout North Carolina;

to exemplify and encourage **good stewardship** of North Carolina's natural resources for all citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed
at a cost of \$630.00 or \$0.08 per copy.*

SAFETY ZONE

KEEP COOL WHILE WORKING IN HEAT

✓ Drink water before you get thirsty; 12 oz. every 15-20 minutes is recommended.

✓ Keep up with the latest temperature and heat index forecasts and current readings.

✓ Know the warning signs of a heat illness and learn ways you can stay cool such as dressing for the occasion.

✓ Act quickly when a heat illness is suspected; seek medical attention for cramping, rapid pulse, heavy sweating, hot red skin, dizziness, nausea, confusion, etc.

The Steward
NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Public Information Office
1615 MSC
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615

